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SUBJECT: Goma Round-Up February 3, 2008

Ref: Kinshasa 116

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Kabila's envoy met South Kivu armed groups (minus Banyamulenge dissidents) February 2 in Goma and will meet with them again in Bukavu February 4. Rumors of a split in CNDP appear to be false. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The principal disturbance in the Kivus February 3 was an earthquake at 09:34 with its epicenter 20 kilometers north of Bukavu (reftel). Tremors were noticeable in Goma but no loss of human life was reported here. Aftershocks persisted through the day, moving from the western escarpment to the eastern escarpment. The perennial fear in Goma is that shifting in the rift will, at some point, cause a rupture in the sides or base of the volcano Nyiragongo (15 kilometers north of Goma), which has the largest lava pool in the world and which leaked most recently in 2002 with great material damage to Goma. But Goma and Gisenyi have apparently escaped the volcanic nightmare this time around.

¶3. (SBU) The rumor mill at the end of the week carried the message that the CNDP had split, with the leader of Nkunda's eastern pocket, Sultani Makenga, as the leader of a separate party. Poloff spoke February 3 to Bertrand Bisimwa, member of the CNDP delegation to the Kivus Conference, who said that he had just spoken by telephone to Makenga, who he said laughed at the rumor. (Bisimwa said he himself planned to remain in Goma as CNDP representative.) MONUC Eastern Division commander General Bikram Singh told Poloff that he had had his local commander ask Makenga directly what was going on, and Makenga had similarly told him that there was nothing to the rumor. Apparently, Makenga had been holding meetings to inform his forces about the Acte d'Engagement, which meetings had been interpreted in the rumor mill to mean he was splitting off from Nkunda.

¶4. (SBU) Separately, the chief of MONUC's Joint Military Assessment Committee told PolCouns February 4 in Kinshasa that a series of upgrades in the ranks of CNDP officers was the proximate cause of the rumor. The process, which for example promoted Makenga and other senior battalion commanders to brigadier general, was aimed to ensure they would enter the FARDC through brassage at the higher ranks.

¶5. (SBU) At the end-of-week OCHA meeting February 1, the UN security officer reported that the titular head of PARECO, "General" La Fontaine Kakule, had expressed willingness to go to brassage with 200 combatants. (Note: PARECO appears to have several branches, but a representative of PARECO spoke at the Kivus Conference in the name of La Fontaine. La Fontaine has in fact already gone through the brassage process. End note.) The security officer also noted reports of recent fighting between the FOCA and RUD factions of FDLR, north of Rutshuru. OCHA reported that the roads to the west (Masisi) and to the north (Rutshuru and beyond) of Goma were open

with traffic moving unhindered.

¶6. (SBU) Kivus Conference president Apollinaire Malu Malu called EU poloff Jean-Pierre Dumont to say that he would be returning to Kinshasa from Canada February 7 and perhaps coming to Goma February 18. He sought Dumont's views on the aftermath of the conference, to which Dumont responded that Kabila's envoy, Vice-Admiral Didier Etumba, had gotten through a rocky week but that it had ended well. Dumont told Malu Malu that there was considerable confusion about the structures to be established in the wake of the conference. Malu Malu said that his grand concept of structures need not be taken too seriously, as the key organ would be the Technical Commission and particularly its military component functioning in the Kivus; all the rest, he said, was show to please ethnic and armed groups.

¶7. (SBU) Kabila is sending a political team to Goma February 4, led by Norbert Basengezi Katintima, a confidant of conference leader Vital Kamerhe. Katintima told Dumont that the team's mission was to support the efforts of Etumba, including bringing along an extra \$50,000 to hand out to needy armed groups (if necessary) to promote their "flexibility."

¶8. (SBU) Etumba met 17 representatives of South Kivu Mai Mai groups February 2 at the Karibu Hotel in Goma, where they were gathered for a week-long reconciliation workshop co-sponsored by the Wilson Center. He urged them to travel February 3 to Bukavu, where Etumba would convene a full meeting of South Kivu armed groups in situ -- meaning, the same groups plus the Banyamulenge rebel group FRF (or Group of 47). His essential message to the South Kivu Mai Mai was, "Do as I say, here is an extra 10,000 dollars" (which 8th Military Region commander General Vainqueur Mayala handed over). The 17 agreed to do as told.

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¶9. (SBU) International facilitators (EU, UK, U.S.), SRSG Chief of Staff John Almstrom, and General Singh will participate in the Bukavu meeting February 4. Almstrom and Singh will emphasize, as they did to the North Kivu armed groups January 31, the importance of utilizing the interim MONUC focal point to handle allegations of ceasefire violations.

GARVELINK